United Nations A/53/719

General Assembly

Distr.: General
2 December 1998
English
Original: Russian

Fifty-third session
Agenda item 46
Fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Letter dated 1 December 1998 from the Permanent Representative of Kazakhstan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith the congratulatory message addressed to you on 30 November 1998 by the President of Kazakhstan, His Excellency Nursultan A. Nazarbaev, on the occasion of the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the text of this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly under agenda item 46.

(*Signed*) Akmaral Kh. **Arystanbekova**
Ambassador
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Annex

Congratulatory message addressed the Secretary-General by the President of Kazakhstan on 30 November 1998 on the occasion of the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Human Rights Day, which is commemorated each year by the whole of progressive mankind, is marked this year by a special event — the fiftieth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The significance of this instrument is hard to overestimate. By proclaiming that recognition of human rights is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world, the Declaration summed up world experience in the sphere of protection of human rights and became the fundamental document of the twentieth century in this sphere.

Over the 50 years since the adoption of the Declaration, the world has changed substantially, and new political and economic realities have emerged. The globalization that covers the basic spheres of human activity has radically altered the habitual conceptions of modern life. However, issues of the protection of human rights have not become less urgent. On the contrary, in a situation of general globalization they have acquired universal overtones, and thanks to the efforts of the United Nations, international cooperation in this field has begun to develop more dynamically.

In emphasizing the worldwide nature of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, I wish to note its special significance for the newly independent States that have embarked on a course of democratic development. One of these is my country, Kazakhstan.

Having opted for democracy seven years ago, Kazakhstan is making considerable efforts to conduct political reforms whose aim is to ensure the rights and freedoms of each citizen of Kazakhstan. The Constitution embodies an extremely broad range of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of citizens which reflect almost to the full extent international standards in the sphere of human rights. To ensure the implementation of the provisions of the Constitution, I recently initiated new steps to intensify the democratic transformations which cover such important spheres as ensuring fair elections, increasing the influence of the political parties, ensuring the independence of the legislature, the judiciary and the mass media, creating a developed civil society and increasing the role and improving the status of women. It is on the success of such reforms that the level of democracy in each specific State will in the final analysis depend.

The democratization of society is a long and gradual process. In many States, it has taken several centuries. In those countries where democracy and its institutions existed but began to be suppressed after the Second World War, they can be revived fairly quickly. In Kazakhstan, however, where no democratic institutions in the modern sense existed, this process started from scratch. Accordingly, we are moving step by step, instilling democratic culture in the population. Our road is thus much longer and more difficult, but it is already apparent that in modern multiethnic Kazakhstan there is no place for ethnic and religious extremism. All the peoples inhabiting Kazakhstan are today building the new democratic State together.

The immutability of the policy of further developing the principles of democracy is confirmed by Kazakhstan's accession to United Nations international conventions in the human rights field. Currently, Kazakhstan is a party to more than 14 multilateral international treaties regulating various aspects of rights protection activity. It acceded to four of them this year: the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination

Against Women, the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. With the development of our country's political and socio-economic potential, the issue of Kazakhstan's accession to the international covenants on human rights is also becoming a topical one, and we are beginning this process.

In commemorating Human Rights Day together with the entire world community, Kazakhstan confirms its devotion to the high purposes of international cooperation for the protection of human rights. We are ready to extend the necessary support to the noble activity of the United Nations in this field.

Please accept my congratulations on the occasion of the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and my sincere wishes for the success of the United Nations in ensuring respect for human rights throughout the world.

(*Signed*) Nursultan **Nazarbaev**